

THE MOYNIHAN REPORT AND THE NEGRO FAMILY:

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

A THESIS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NEGRO FAMILY IN AMERICA .....	10
III. THE CASE OF MOYNIHAN: SUPPORT .....	19
IV. MOYNIHAN: A REFUTATION .....	30
V. CONCLUSION .....	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	41

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In March 1965, a document published by the Office of Policy Planning and Research of the United States Department of Labor was released which proposed that a national effort was necessary for enhancing the status of the Black family in the American society.

"The Negro Family: A Case for National Action" or as it is more commonly referred to the Moynihan Report, was formulated by Daniel P. Moynihan, who at the time of its publication, was Assistant Secretary of Labor. Moynihan in collaboration with his staff documented a report on the condition of the lower class Negro family in America. It is cited that: "At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family."<sup>1</sup>

By investigating the structural characteristics and components of the Negro family, the report proclaims that the structure of the lower class Negro family is highly unstable and in many urban centers is approaching complete breakdown.<sup>2</sup>

The Negro family's pattern of matriarchy has been viewed by some social scientists as a reversal of normative standard of the American

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<sup>1</sup>Lee Rainwater and William Yancey, The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1967), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

way of life. The concept of "matriarchy" in the Negro family is in the Moynihan Report frequently considered equated with high rates of marital disruption, high welfare dependency, high illegitimacy and an overall emasculation of Negro males. These principal variables cited above are the crux of Moynihan's Report.

In making a critical analysis of the Moynihan Report, it should be of particular importance to determine the usefulness, validity, and relevance of the report to the Negro family in America. Therefore, the problem undertaken in this thesis is to determine how the Moynihan Report is or is not a legitimate instrumental policy capable of defining and eradicating the situational factor of the lower class Negro family.

The theoretical basis of the "Moynihan Report" is derived from the scholarly work of E. Franklin Frazier on the Negro family. Actually, Frazier may be referred as the middle man in formulating a theory of the Negro family with other intellectuals as Rainwater, Yancey, Pettigrew and Glazer on one side of the fence and Billingsley, Staples, Mack, Kandel and others on the other side. This separation is due to the various interpretations of Frazier's work by each of the researchers mentioned above.

#### Review of Literature

In reviewing literary works on the Negro family in America, The Negro Family in the United States by E. Franklin Frazier is an interesting starting point.<sup>1</sup> Frazier's classic study of the Negro family begins with the impact that slavery had on the Negro family and continues through the

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<sup>1</sup>E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Family in the United States (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939).



period of emancipation to the urbanization movement of Negroes in this country. The matriarchal pattern of the Negro family in America, which emerged through the institution of slavery and has generated itself through the generations, is a continuous theme throughout his study. It is, of course, the basis of Moynihan's thesis.

Frazier's account of the Negro family describes the downtrodden situational conditions that the Negro family has been forced to endure; however, it also displays the ability of the Negro man to overcome the obstacles presented in the mainstream of the American society such as discrimination, prejudice and racism.

Frazier emphasizes that the plight of the Negro family, in becoming assimilated and acculturated in the white society, depends primarily on the economic organization and participation in community life.<sup>1</sup> One section of Frazier's book is devoted to the matriarchy household and another to the emergence of the patriarchal structure of the Negro family.

Thomas Pettigrew presents an investigation on the Negro man from the standpoint of his personality, health, intelligence and crime rate.<sup>2</sup> Of particular interest to this thesis topic, is Pettigrew's treatment of the Negro family's disorganizations, and the effects of the absent father. The main theme of the book seems to be a descriptive analysis of the physiological make-up of the Negro man in America by discussing the social and psychological factors affecting him. Pettigrew notes that personality

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas F. Pettigrew, A Profile of the Negro American (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1964).

development of children in families without fathers may be related to three recurrent problems among Negro Americans--juvenile delinquency, crime against persons and schizophrenia.<sup>1</sup> The study presents cases of the effects of the family functioning ability in a fatherless household.

Lee Rainwater and William Yancey collaborate to write the book The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy.<sup>2</sup> This text is a critique of the Moynihan Report and a discussion of the numerous responses from government officials, civil rights leaders, and intellectuals. The authors discuss the strategies Moynihan employed in his document. It is an excellent source of reference in analyzing the "Moynihan Report."

In viewing the more recent scholarly works on the Negro Family in the United States, Andrew Billingsley's Black Families in White America indicates that:

But unlike Moynihan and others, we do not view the Negro family as a casual nexus in a "tangle of pathology" which feeds on itself. Rather, we view the Negro family in theoretical perspective as a subsystem of the larger society. It is, in our view, an absorbing adaptive and amazingly resilient mechanism for the socialization of his children and the civilization of its society.<sup>3</sup>

Billingsley gives a historical account of the Negro family and gives a more positive insight on the situational condition that the Negro man has and continues to experience in white America.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Lee Rainwater and William Yancey, The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1967).

<sup>3</sup>Andrew Billingsley, Black Families in White America (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 33.

The Black Family, a text concerning numerous studies and essays, edited by Robert Staples, also presents supportive evidence to the stability of the Negro family in America.<sup>1</sup> An entire section is devoted to "The Moynihan Report" and various related issues concerning and referred to in the report are dealt with in the text. Robert Staples' article, "The Myth of the Black Matriarchy," does much to refute Moynihan's attack on the matriarchal structure of the lower class Negro family.

The researcher is attempting to break away from some of the traditional stereotypes and myths of the Negro family in an attempt to focus on the strengths and the survival mechanisms employed by the Negro family in America. It is hoped that a more positive perspective can be derived from the research made by Billingsley and Staples.

### Theory

The report "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" by Moynihan was considered by the writer, to be an attack on the stability of the Black family in America. Moynihan particularly cites five variables outlining his thesis:<sup>2</sup>

1. High rate of illegitimacy of Negroes;
2. High unemployment rates in the lower Negro family;
3. A quarter of urban Negro marriages are dissolved;
4. An increase of Negro welfare recipients;
5. One-fourth of Negro families are headed by females.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Staples, ed., The Black Family (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1971).

<sup>2</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit.

Since the publication of this report, numerous studies and essays have been concerned with the findings and resolutions included in it. In fulfilling the researcher's objective of supplying information that would give insight to a better perspective of the Negro family, it is felt by the writer that certain important factors in the Negro family have been misinterpreted or over-looked by Moynihan in the process of analogies. The researcher makes particular reference to the role of the mother in the socialization process of her off-springs, which if realistically approached, would reveal that she is the primary frame of reference in the family structure. This is in no way an attempt by the writer to devaluate the importance of the father in the family household, but it is an attempt to refute the attack of the matrifocal ideology that is defined as detrimental to the welfare and survival of the Negro family; hence, other causes must be sought by social scientists to explain the dilemma of the Negro family.

As Moynihan has collected a "tanble of pathological" aspects resulting from the so-called breakdown of the Black family, the researcher views those elements as consequences of a survival mechanism created from situational factors in this country. The census data speak for itself, in as much as statistical data can be manipulated to display only that which is desired by the investigators. Therefore, in accepting or not accepting the premises that: one, there are approximately a quarter of Negro births illegitimate; two, that a quarter of urban Negro marriages are dissolved which has led to an increase in welfare dependency; and three, that one-fourth of Negro families are headed by females, depends primarily on investigating the cause and effect variables of the problems, and placing

the concluding evidence within their proper perspectives. As it is quite evident, Moynihan has defined the Negro family as an institution of pathological disorders; and it is the obligation of the researcher to re-define the Negroes' socializing institution that has enabled its members to survive in a white racist America.

The Negro family should be defined as a distinct social system within the larger American social system. And it is, therefore, affected by other existing institutions with the American system. Billingsley has explained the position of the Negro family in relation to the American society as: ". . . Whatever ails the Negro family is a reflection of ailments in the society at large."<sup>1</sup>

A structural-functional approach to the position of the Black family in America can be advantageous if it is understood that as Billingsley also notes:

The place of Negro families in the wider society, and in the Negro community viewed as an ethnic subsociety varies greatly; consequently, the ability of Negro families to meet the requirements of society and the needs of their members also varies across a wide spectrum.<sup>2</sup>

Direct attack has been made on the lower class Negro family in America as deteriorating. However, one must not overlook the fact that those factors affecting the Negro lower class group, also affect any other ethnic group in this country--the larger society itself. It is simply the mannerism in which the effects are received and dealt with in a functional view.

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<sup>1</sup>Billingsley, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

The research shall employ the use of empirical studies in ascertaining data for this thesis. It will be through the supportive and rebutting information gathered that the objectives of this endeavor will be accomplished.

The objective will be to present works pertaining to the "Moynihan Report" and the Negro family. The writer recognizes that there are so many aspects involved in the "Moynihan Report" that each could easily result in a thesis individually. Since the Moynihan report is quite theoretical, it is imperative that the writer does not become so theoretical in attacking each problem, but rather to follow the described objective of this paper. However, a theoretical foundation is important in establishing grounds for a case of discussion or a historical background, "a structural-functional theory" of the Negro family, and a concentration of the pathologies of the Negro family that Moynihan has found will be chiefly dealt with.

The introductory chapter has concerned itself with a foundational frame of reference--what the "Moynihan Report" is, how it came into being, and the condition of the Negro family in America.

The second chapter is the "Historical Background of the Negro Family in America." Scholarly works concerning the history of the Negro family, from the embarkment of slavery, to the plantation through reconstruction and its present position are discussed.

The third chapter, "The Case of Moynihan: Support" is centered primarily on the scholarly works of Pettigrew, Glazer, Rainwater, Yancey, Moynihan and others who have indicated their support of the "Moynihan Report."

"Moynihan: A Refutation" is the title of chapter four. In this chapter the writer provides arguments, based on the works of Billingsley, Staples, Kandel, Gans and other writers, which disputes Moynihan's basic thesis.

The concluding chapter gives the researcher the opportunity to express impressions from the proper comparative analysis in support or rebut of the "Moynihan Report" and to elaborate on Frazier's study of the Negro family in America.

The objective of this research will show that the Negro family in America is both a stable and functional institution of the American society.

## CHAPTER II

### AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NEGRO FAMILY IN AMERICA

The introduction of the first Negro families in the southern colony of Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 marked the beginning of a race of people who would be exploited and dehumanized within a forty-year period thereafter. The pioneers of the Negro American family came primarily from West Africa and were originally employed as indentured servants as Franklin notes in his study of the Negro family in America: "There can be little doubt that the earliest Negroes in Virginia occupied a position similar to that of the white servants in the colony."<sup>1</sup> However, the status of the Negro man as a contract worker in America was not to continue much longer because of the labor problems which remained in the colonies. As a final resolution to the labor problems in the colonies, Franklin exclaims:

The answer to this vexing problem appeared to be the perpetual servitude of Negroes, whose supply seemed inexhaustible and who apparently presented none of the problems that white servants presented.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, after 1640, the Negro workers could not expect to be employed on a contract basis and the institution of slavery in America emerged.

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<sup>1</sup>John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 72.



The sociological significance of the institution of slavery on the Negro family is perpetuated in its manner of dehumanizing and deculturation of their African descent. Andrew Billingsley describes the impact that slavery had on the Negro family as:

Slavery then, was a massive disruption of the former cultural life of the Africans, which at the same time by its very nature prevented the adequate assimilation of the slaves into the New World culture.<sup>1</sup>

It is important that the African background of the Negro family in America be discussed primarily because in Africa the family was a strict, discipline organization. The family was an economic and a religious unit which through its ties with wider kinship circles, was also a political unit. Family life then, was strong and viable and was the center of the African civilization.<sup>2</sup>

Studies on the African background by such scholars as DuBois, Frazier, Herskovits, and others suggest certain elements of the African family organization were quite distinctive from the family structure in America, such as its polygynous and matrilineal nature.<sup>3</sup> Of particular interest to scholars of the Negro family has been in determining to what extent, if any, did the slave on the plantation retain his African culture. The first chapter of Frazier's The Negro Family in the United States devotes itself to the slaves and their ties to their mother country, Africa:

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew Billingsley, Black Families in White America (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>W.E.B. DuBois, The Negro American Family (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1909), pp. 10-18.

Unfortunately, the few memories and traditions of Africa forebearers that once stirred the imagination of the older generations have failed to take root in the minds of the present generation of youth.<sup>1</sup>

However, family life for the slaves in America was primarily controlled by the master (owner) of the plantation. DuBois indicates three features of Negro slavery in America as: (1) no legal marriage, (2) no legal family, (3) no legal control over children.<sup>2</sup>

Although the slave marriages were not legal in contract, this is not to negate the existence of plantation marriages. As Billingsley points out:

Marriage among slaves was not altogether absent in the United States and was probably more common than has been generally recognized. . . . The strong hand of the slave owner dominated the Negro family, which existed only at his mercy and often at his own personal instigation.<sup>3</sup>

Because legal provisions were not extended to slave marriages, a slave marriage could be dissolved without recourse to public tribunals.<sup>4</sup> The lack of a protective legal system for the slave marriage promoted the exploitation of slave women by their white overseer for both pleasure and profit, and denied the role of the slave man as a husband or father.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Family in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>DuBois, op.cit., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Billingsley, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Urich Bonnell Phillips, "Slavery in the Old South" in Americans From Africa: Slavery and its Aftermath, ed. by Peter I. Rose (New York: Atherton Press, Inc., 1970), p. 123.

<sup>5</sup>Billingsley, op. cit., p. 68.

To elaborate even further on the effects that the owner of the slaves dictated the eligibility for marriage and also determined the destination of the slave's children. DuBois mentions that "parents were almost never consulted as to the disposal to be made of their young."<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, the father of a slave family had very little input in stabilizing his household. Frazier states further that:

The fact that slave families were often divided when it was to the economic advantage of the owners is too well established to take seriously the denials of those who have idealized slavery. <sup>2</sup>

Frederick Douglass in his memoirs of his slavery days noted:

Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labor.<sup>3</sup>

In many cases, children were completely separated from their parents.

DuBois states in his account of the separation of child and family:

Persons who own plantations and yet live in cities, often take children from their parents as soon as they are weaned, and send them into the country; because they do not want the time of the mother taken up by attendance upon her own children. . . .<sup>4</sup>

However, there were many plantations which allowed the mother to return to her household after working in the fields:

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<sup>1</sup>W.E.B. DuBois, The Negro American Family (Atlanta: Atlanta University, 1909), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Family in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 41-2.

<sup>3</sup>Frederick Douglass, "From Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave" in Growing Up Black ed. by Jay David (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1968), p. 96.

<sup>4</sup>DuBois, op. cit., p. 2.

"One of my earliest recollections," writes Booker T. Washington, "is that of my mother cooking a chicken late at night, and awakening her children for the purpose of feeding them." The devotion of the mothers to their own children was often demonstrated in their sacrifices to see them when they were separated from them.<sup>1</sup>

When slaves were put up for sale, many slave mothers would plead that their children be sold with them. It is noted that the Negro man, husband or father was seldom included in the selling of a family:

. . . Children usually remained with the mother; the father was incidental and could easily be sold away. The role of the mother could be extended to that of "mammy" for the white families.<sup>2</sup>

Frazier indicated that the slave mother and her children especially under ten were treated as a group: A wench, complete cook, washer and ironer and her four children--a boy 12, another 9, a girl 5, that sews; and a girl about 4 years old.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of sexual association between the master and slave mother, mulatto families became quite common. Frazier indicates that the master-slave woman relationship fostered two types of results:

At the bottom of the scale was the Negro woman who was raped and became separated from her mulatto child without any violence to her maternal feelings; or the slave mother who submitted dumbly or out of animal reeling to sexual relations that spawned a nameless and unloved half-breed over the South. Between these two extremes there were varying degrees of human solidarity created in the intimacies of sex relations and the birth of an offspring.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Frazier, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Melville J. Herskovits, "Africanisms in Secular Life" in Americans From Africa Slavery and Its Aftermath, ed. by Peter I. Rose (New York: Atherton Press, Inc., 1970), p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Frazier, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>4</sup>Frazier, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

It is not to be overlooked that sex relations between slave men and white indentured servants also existed.<sup>1</sup>

During the Civil War years, 1860-1865, intensified deliberation over the emancipation of the Negro slave became a major issue of the Lincoln administration. Finally, after a great deal of dissension, Lincoln proclaimed on January 1, 1863: "All persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of the State, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thence-forward, and forever free."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, physical freedom from the plantation did not mean acceptance and opportunity for the Negro family in America. As Frazier points out, "Emancipation was a crisis in the life of the Negro that tended to destroy all his traditional ways of thinking and acting."<sup>3</sup>

Billingsley notes that: "For ten thousand of Negroes, emancipation meant the freedom to die of starvation and illness." Despite the many obstacles that appeared for the Negro family after becoming emancipated, the Negro family as a society survived. Billingsley also notes, "of course, Emancipation had some advantages for the Negro family. Although family members could be whipped, run out of town, or murdered, they could not be sold away from their families."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Frazier, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), p. 282.

<sup>3</sup>Frazier, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>Billingsley, op. cit., pp. 69-71.

Bernard indicates in her study of the Negro family that after the Civil War, laws in many states were changed to legalize slave marriages.<sup>1</sup> The Freedman Bureau issued orders clarifying the rules relating to marriage among Negroes.<sup>2</sup> The idea of permanency in a marital relationship became a major institutionalizing element that the Negro was confronted with.

After emancipation, the migration of the Negro populace began-- thousands of Negro men and women began to wander aimlessly about the country or in search of adventure and with work in the army camps and cities.<sup>3</sup>

In 1860, 92 per cent of all Negroes resided in the South; and by 1940 72 per cent remained in the South. By 1960, 60 per cent and 1968, 58 per cent Negro population remained in the South.<sup>4</sup>

According to Frazier, one of the most momentous changes in the Negro family life was the urbanization of the Negro population.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the migration from rural to urban living, from the South to the North, the Negro family has become more assimilated in the institutional components (advantageous or disadvantageous as they may be) of the American mainstream. It has been a constant test of resiliency in the quest of survival for the Black family.

<sup>1</sup>Jessie Bernard, Marriage and Family Among Negroes (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Frazier, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>4</sup>"We the Black People of the United States" in The Family Life of Black People ed. by Charles V. Willie (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970), p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>Frazier, op. cit., p. 363.

Due to the insecurities of the majority group to maintain their own identity, racism became even more pronounced as "separate but equal" facilities became the mode of life in the United States. The 1954 Supreme Court decision declared the "separate but equal" doctrine unconstitutional. However, the remnants of institutional racism in America did not change.

Although to a small degree Negroes had already begun to actively express their dissatisfaction with the system, the 1954 decision served as a catalyst for change in the Negro community as the civil rights movement came into full bloom. Such organizations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League were pushing for civil rights. Dr. Martin Luther King and the NAACP in 1955 in the Montgomery boycott was advocating a nonviolent approach to the problems of the Negro man.

By the sixties one could quickly apply theories as "relative deprivation" and "rising expectations" to the aggressive behavior of Negroes in this country. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was enacted by Congress demanding racial equality.

The confrontation of the Civil Rights movement perplexed the white society and strengthened the Negro community--as the leaders of the country both Negro and white recognized the splitting of the nation into two societies. As the socio-economic conditions of the Black man for the most part remained the same, a grave concern of the plight of the Negro minority group became a major issue with many politicians. Finding the solution to the Negro's burden, since the 1954 and 1964 decisions were seemingly not enough, indicated that the crux of the problem must lie within another frame of reference. Goode has said, "Philosophers and

social analysts have noted that society is a structure made up of families, and that the peculiarities of a given society can be described by outlining its family relations.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Daniel P. Moynihan has pointed to the Negro family as a "problem" and a "solution" to the Negro man's destination in this country.

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<sup>1</sup>William Goode, The Family. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 1.



## CHAPTER III

### THE CASE OF MOYNIHAN: SUPPORT

The "Moynihan Report" published in March, 1965 on the Negro family became a controversial topic among intellectuals, civic and political leaders both Negro and white. The "Moynihan Report" bases its main premises on E. Franklin Frazier's The Negro Family in the United States. Frazier's thesis discusses the history and plight of the Negro family in the United States from slavery through reconstruction to the urbanization of the Negro in America. Scholars have differed in their interpretation of Frazier's work on the Negro family.

Moynihan's thesis deals with the pathological aspects which are contributors to the total deterioration of the Negro family, such as female-headed households, illegitimacy, marital disruption, juvenile delinquency and crime. In an attempt to ratify the problems of the Negro family in America, Moynihan has called for a national policy to become implemented.

According to Moynihan, the structure of the lower class Black family in America is highly unstable in comparison to the white family, and this instability is, in many cases, causing a complete breakdown.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Lee Rainwater and William Yancey, The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1967), p. 5.

etiologies of this condition stems from the social and psychological consequences of slavery.

Another element of the problem, according to Moynihan, is the urbanization movement, from rural to urban life. It has produced the Negro slum and increased the percentage of Negro female-headed households.<sup>1</sup> Frazier's work cites:

Family desertion among Negroes in cities appears, then, to be one of the inevitable consequences of the impact of urban life on the simple family organization and folk culture which the Negro has evolved in the rural South.<sup>2</sup>

Moynihan indicates through statistical data that Blacks in America are more urbanized than whites, except for in the South where there is relatively little difference.<sup>3</sup>

Unemployment and poverty are two components which are suggested as augmenting the Negro family problem. Moynihan discusses a vicious cycle developing:

Because in general terms Negro families have the largest number of children and the lowest incomes, many Negro fathers literally cannot support their families. Because the father is either not present, is unemployed, or makes such a low wage, the Negro woman goes to work. Fifty-six per cent of Negro women, age 25 to 64, are in the work force, against 42 per cent of white women. This dependence on the mother's income undermines the position of the father and deprives the children of the kind of attention, particularly in school matters, which is now a standard of middle-class upbringing.<sup>4</sup>

Moynihan concludes that the problem of the Negro family is:

<sup>1</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

Three centuries of injustice have brought about the deep-seated structural distortions in the life of the Negro American. At this point, the present tangle of pathology is capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world. The cycle can be broken only if these distortions are set right.<sup>1</sup>

While Moynihan uses Frazier's study as a foundation for his thesis, scholars such as Pettigrew, Glazer, Rainwater, Yancey and others have complied with his thesis.

Thomas F. Pettigrew in his study of the social and psychological make-up of the American Negro (1964) discusses family disorganization among the Negro family, such as, mother-headed households and absent fathers in the household.<sup>2</sup> In the "Moynihan Report," Pettigrew discusses the effects of racism upon the Negro personality:

A warm, supportive home can effectively compensate for many of the restrictions the Negro child faces outside of the ghetto; consequently, the type of home life a Negro enjoys as a child may be far more crucial for governing the influence of segregation upon his personality than the form the segregation takes--legal or informal, Southern or Northern.<sup>3</sup>

Pettigrew has also done research on the psychological consequences developing in the personality of the Negro child in an home environment without a father and with a female-headed household. His studies indicate that eight-and-nine-year-old children whose fathers are absent seek immediate gratification far more than children whose fathers are present in the home.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it was revealed that five to fourteen year

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<sup>1</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas F. Pettigrew, A Profile of the Negro American (Princeton: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964).

<sup>3</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Pettigrew, op. cit., p. 17.

old Negro youths without fathers experienced unusual difficulty in differentiating between male and female roles.<sup>1</sup> Juvenile delinquency, crimes against persons, and schizophrenia have also been related to the fatherless households in Negro families.<sup>2</sup> The significance of these studies coincide with Moynihan's "tangle of pathology."

An examination of the family background of 44,448 delinquency cases in Philadelphia between 1949 and 1954 documents the frequency of broken homes among delinquents. Sixty-two per cent of the Negro delinquents and 36 per cent of white delinquents were not living with both parents.<sup>3</sup>

In responding to the intellectual ability of the Negro child in a broken home environment, Pettigrew notes the study of Deutsch and Stetler which revealed that Negro children in broken homes score significantly below comparable Negro children from intact homes on intelligence measures.<sup>4</sup> Moynihan's Report shows consistency with Pettigrew's psychological studies on the Negro in America as he exclaims, "White children without fathers at least perceive all about them the pattern of men working." "Negro children without fathers flounder-and fail."<sup>5</sup> Moynihan elaborates further on the affects of the broken home as he indicates that: "When the boys from broken homes are in school, they do not do as

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>Pettigrew, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>5</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., p. 35.

well as the boys from whole families."<sup>1</sup>

Nathan Glazer, another Moynihan partisan, has also done research on the socio-economic condition of the American Negro. In the study of ethnicity in New York City undertaken by Glazer and Moynihan (1963), Glazer's contribution in the study includes a section on the Negro populace in New York City. In his discussion on the Negro family he notes:

There were in 1960 in the New York Metropolitan area 353,000 Negro families; a quarter were headed by women. In contrast, less than one-tenth of the white households were headed by women. The rate of illegitimacy among Negroes is about fourteen or fifteen times that among whites.<sup>2</sup>

Moynihan indicates in his report that nearly one-quarter of Negro births are now illegitimate; and one-fourth of Negro families are headed by females.

The significance of Glazer's discussion on the Negro family in reference to the Moynihan Report is the consistency of causal factors suggested by both scholars contributing to the pathological disorders of the Negro family.

In reviewing the section on the Negro family, one can quickly grasp certain similarities in Glazer's approach to the Negro family with that of Moynihan's. Each scholar refers to E. Franklin Frazier's thesis on the Negro family as they trace the historical background of the Negro from slavery to the urbanization movement in America. Glazer discusses the ideology of equality for the Negro American in relation to his

<sup>1</sup>Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1963), p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

economic condition as determining factors in the progress of the Negro family in America in the Moynihan Report. He states that:

The demand for economic equality is now not the demand for equal opportunities for the equally qualified; it is now the demand for equality of economic results. . . . The demand for equality in education , , . has also become a demand for equality of results, of outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

Glazer elaborates in his study on the effects of the Negro past which is still evident in his present condition:

What slavery began, prejudice and discrimination, affecting jobs, housing, self-respect, have continued to keep alive among many, many colored Americans.<sup>2</sup>

Glazer relates (as Pettigrew and Moynihan) the psychological problems of the Negro especially with males in broken Negro homes headed by females.

In particular, it is probably the Negro boy who suffers in this situation. With an adult male so often lacking, there is a much greater chance of psychological difficulties. Certainly, even without the problems of a figure with whom to model himself, the Negro boy, as was pointed out in talking about jobs, would have problems enough.<sup>3</sup>

In reviewing Glazer's discussion on the Negro problem, he stresses that "self help" on the part of the Negro community agencies would be more effective than public agencies and those of white Protestants.<sup>4</sup>

Moynihan's work with Glazer can be seen in his report on the Negro family.

<sup>1</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Glazer and Moynihan, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

Lee Rainwater has done a considerable amount of research on the lower class Negro family in America. His article, "The Crucible of Identity: The Negro Lower-Class Family" discusses sex and economics of the lower class Negro family which affects the personality of the Negro.<sup>1</sup> Rainwater's treatment of conjugal role segregation in both white and Negro lower-class families, points to the matrifocal structure of the Negro household, in which the wife makes most of the decisions that keep the family going and has the greatest sense of responsibility to the family.<sup>2</sup> Rainwater interprets the significance of the male employment in the lower class family and indicates that the Negro family is more vulnerable to disruption when men are temporarily unable to perform their provider roles.<sup>3</sup>

Moynihan's views on unemployment of the Negro male in his report is supported by Edward Wight Bakke's description of the effects of unemployment on family structure.<sup>4</sup> Moynihan provides testimonies on the effect of labor in the Negro family in his report.

Whitney Young regards the effects of unemployment on the Negro male in the family household:

Both as a husband and as a father the Negro male is made to feel inadequate, not because he is unlovable or unaffectionate, lacks intelligence or even a gray flannel suit. But in a society that measures a man by the size of his pay check, he doesn't

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<sup>1</sup>Lee Rainwater, "Husband-Wife Relations" in The Black Family ed. by Robert Staples (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Incorporated, 1971), pp. 163-166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

stand very tall in a comparison with his white counterpart. To this situation he may react with withdrawal, bitterness toward society, aggression both within the family and racial group, self-hatred, or crime.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Pettigrew also gives his impressions on the aspect of unemployment for the Negro male and the matrifocal household:

The Negro wife in this situation can easily become disgusted with her financially dependent husband, and her rejection of him further alienates the male from family life. Embittered by their experiences with men, many Negro mothers often act to perpetuate the mother-centered pattern by taking a greater interest in their daughters than their sons.<sup>2</sup>

In Rainwater's Behind Ghetto Walls (1970), he deliberates on marital roles and family instability.<sup>3</sup> This text seemingly regenerates much of Rainwater's previous work analyzing the Moynihan Report and the political controversy arousing thereafter. The particular research shall be discussed later in this chapter. The study is basically concerned with a slum community and the institutions that provide support for its inhabitants. He again asserts the conjugal role segregation, in the lower class Negro, as an attributing factor in marital disruption and role differentiation in the structure of the lower class family.<sup>4</sup>

In his description of the role of matrifocality in the lower-class Negro family he states:

It is important to understand how deeply taken for granted these matrifocal patterns are. For the woman, taken for

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<sup>1</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Lee Rainwater, Behind Ghetto Walls (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 155-187.



grantedness involves most centrally the knowledge that she can head a household if she must, that this is not a remarkable event in her world, and that her culture provides techniques and support for doing this. The man takes for granted that he can ignore paternal responsibilities without serious penalty and in fact without great loss of status or his wife and children.

Finally all this affects the meaning of marriage...getting married can be regarded not so much as the contracting of a long-term relationship but as "rite de passage."<sup>1</sup>

Rainwater views the joint effect of the anomic street system (which allows for manipulation and exploitation of its members) and economic marginality, as creating situations in which marital role relationships are highly conflicted because neither partner can rely on the other.<sup>2</sup>

Lee Rainwater and William Yancey discuss the strategies and political controversy of the Moynihan Report in their analysis on the report.<sup>3</sup> By interviewing intellectuals, civil rights leaders, federal government officials and other representatives concerned with the study in discussion, they developed a source of references needed for their analysis.

In the section on Moynihan's strategy employed in their research, the authors state:

Moynihan sought to present a sharply focused argument leading to the conclusion that the government's economic and social welfare programs, existing and prospective ones should be systematically designed to encourage the stability of the Negro family.<sup>4</sup>

The authors stress that the immediate goal of the Report was to stimulate a commitment by the Administration to engage in a long-range

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>3</sup>Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1967).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

policy planning.<sup>1</sup> They also indicate that the Moynihan Report was more than a research report or a technical document; it was a polemic which made use of social science techniques and findings to convince others.<sup>2</sup>

In the preface of their text, Rainwater and Yancey state their position in their interest of the Moynihan Report and its controversy.

We have been involved for several years in conducting a research on the experience of one particular Negro population--families living in a large public housing project in St. Louis. . . . The tone of the article (the Moynihan Report) suggested some kind of direct intervention into family life. . . . To us, Moynihan's report seemed very much in line with studies of lower-class life that were initiated in the 1930's by such scholars as Davis, Gardner, Dollard, Cayton, Drake, and others.<sup>3</sup>

The authors state that Moynihan emphasized the destructive potential of disorganized family life, much as Frazier, Clark and others, as he demonstrated the extent of family disorganization among poor Negroes and the relation of family disorganization to various social problems in the ghetto.<sup>4</sup>

In a discussion between Robert Coles and a Negro minister, Coles indicates that he felt the Moynihan Report spoke to Americans demanding change or action. He further states that: "I guess I'm defending them and their purposes. I suppose to some extent I can do that, not being

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 297-8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. ix, x.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

a Negro and not feeling as sensitive about some of these matters."<sup>1</sup>

C. Eric Lincoln in his affirmation of the Moynihan Report states: Whites can offer little assistance: The Negro must establish family stability before establishing himself into the white society."<sup>2</sup> He further suggests that a psychology of slavery must be dealt with if the Negro is to overcome his deteriorating condition in America.

A study on the effects that working wives in lower-class families have on men as husbands and fathers gives support to the Moynihan Report. By using a sample of blue-collar Negro low-income married males with their families, Joan Aldous found that "Any movement toward greater husband-father participation in the lower-class Negro family depends upon strengthening his position--not just employment but employment at a wage that permits the male to be the major provider for the family. When the wife is employed, this lowers the man's performance of family responsibility; when the husband is unemployed, he becomes even less active."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Coles, Children of Crisis: A Study of Courage and Fear (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1967), pp. 143-46.

<sup>2</sup>Sidney M. Wilhelm, Who Needs the Negro? (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup>Joan Aldous, "Wives Employment Status and Lower-Class Men as Husband-Father: Support for the Moynihan Thesis," Journal of Marriage and Family Vol. 31 (August, 1969), p. 476.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOYNIHAN: A REFUTATION

The public release of the Moynihan Report in 1965 stirred up a great deal of criticism and set the stage for newer investigations on the Negro family in America. The issues of stability, matriarchy, father absent households, illegitimacy and related elements have suggested the condition of a disorganized family structure. The main premise that will be dealt with in this particular chapter, is whether or not, the Negro American family is in a stage of deterioration as Moynihan's study on the Negro family concludes.

Andrew Billingsley's study on the Negro family in America, devotes a section on the scholarly work which has been done on the Negro family.<sup>1</sup> He notes that the majority of literature on the Negro family has viewed it as a social problem; therefore, he exclaims, "Thus, despite the fact that the vast majority of Negro families are stable, conforming, and achieving, and cause no problems to anybody, the tendency to view them in negative terms persist."<sup>2</sup>

Billingsley even elaborates further when he observes that studies which have focused on the Negro family in the lower class are not really

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew Billingsley, Black Families in White America (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Incorporated, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 199

concerned with family life, but are concerned instead with poverty, family breakdown, and illegitimacy; and they somehow tie these phenomena to the Negro experience.<sup>1</sup> The Moynihan Report deals exclusively with the lower class Negro family as a problem and a deteriorating unit in the Negro community.

Kenneth J. Gergen's "Lost in the Shuffle: A Political Case History" critiques The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy.<sup>2</sup> Gergen observes the data available to Moynihan, which would have weakened several of his arguments, were unused; comparative data for Negro and white populations were not used extensively enough; heavy reliance was placed on correlational data which lent themselves to explanations other than those the report proposed.<sup>3</sup> As previously indicated throughout the research Moynihan accumulates a degree of pathological disorders in reference to the lower class Negro family, such as high rates of illegitimacy, high unemployment rate for Negro men, a high degree of marital dissolutions, an increase of Negro welfare recipients, and an increase of female-headed Negro families.<sup>4</sup>

The Black Family consists of a series of essays and studies on the situation of the Negro family in America. It contains a section on the Moynihan Report which contains Moynihan's chapter, "Tangle of

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 207

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth J. Gergen, "Lost in the Shuffle: A Political Case History" *Science*, 15 (November, 1967), p.p. 896-7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 896.

<sup>4</sup>Lee Rainwater and William Yancey, The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1967).

Pathology" and criticisms from two scholars, William Ryan and Laura Carper.<sup>1</sup>

Ryan's article "Savage Discovery--The Moynihan Report," which also appears in the Nation discusses the methodological weaknesses, the manifest misstatements, and the error of interpreting statistical relationship in terms of cause-effect as the basic faults of the report.<sup>2</sup> Ryan attacks the "tangle of pathology" which Moynihan presents in his report as a scapegoat mechanism instead of dealing with the direct causes of the Negro condition in America. Ryan heavily criticizes the treatment of illegitimacy that Moynihan discusses. Moynihan's data shows that the illegitimacy rate for the lower-class Negro family is eight times the ratio of whites. Ryan cites the treatment of illegitimacy as an example of inept methodology as he summarizes:<sup>3</sup>

The reported rates of illegitimacy among Negroes and whites tell us nothing at all about differences in family structure, historical forces, instability, or anything else about which the authors speculate. From the known data, we can conclude only that Negro and white girls probably engage in premarital intercourse in about the same proportions, but that the white girls more often take Enovid or uses a diaphragm: if she has the baby, first she is more often able to conceal it and, second, she has an infinitely greater opportunity to give it up for adoption.

Ryan's main argument seems to be centered on the concepts of racism and discrimination as the causes of inequality between Negro and white

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<sup>1</sup>The Black Family ed. by Robert Staples, (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Incorporated, 1971), pp. 37-71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

instead of weaknesses and defeats of the Negro himself.<sup>1</sup> This contrasts Moynihan's statement of a sickness perpetuating itself in the Negro community.<sup>2</sup>

Laura Carper examines the statistical data of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) which Moynihan has indicated a startling increase by Negro families.<sup>3</sup> Carper found that, "The strange graph in the Moynihan Report is the result of graphing the wrong things. The negative correlation is due to an inconsistency between youth unemployment rate and the unemployment rate of the non-white male population as a whole and to an important change in policy on the part of the welfare authorities."<sup>4</sup>

Carper elaborates on the concept of matriarchy which seemingly is the crucial detrimental element in the Negro family according to Moynihan. Carper's impression on matriarchy in the Negro family states:

"Matriarchy" is a cultural formation common to many oppressed people throughout the history of western civilization--regardless of their won past history and regardless of the values they themselves held.

I am seeking to show the "matriarchy" within the larger social context of what the report calls "patriarchy" is common to the way of life of poor people, and further, that people living under oppression always develop social formations which appear to the surrounding oppressive culture to be excessive or pathological . . . .A people is not destroyed by its history. What destroys a people is physical annihilation or assimilation, not its family life.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ryan, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Rainwater and Yancey, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Laura Carper, "The Negro Family and the Moynihan Report" in The Black Family, ed. by Robert Staples (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Incorporated, 1971), pp. 67-68.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>5</sup>Carper, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

Robert Staples' "The Myth of the Black Matriarchy" attacks Moynihan's treatment of the matrifocal structure of the lower class Negro family. He observes that Moynihan points to the Negro matriarchy as being responsible for the low educational achievement of Negro males; the matriarchy is accused of harshly exploiting the Negro male; and a correlation is made between the fatherless homes and juvenile delinquency.<sup>1</sup>

Staples indicates that the myth of matriarchy in the Negro family is strengthened by Moynihan's assertion that 25 per cent of Negro households are headed by women.<sup>2</sup> Since the Negro woman is described as being a powerful figure in the Negro family, how much power does she actually have? Staples seems to believe that the power of the Negro woman is like American democracy--more apparent than real.<sup>3</sup> He directs her decision-making ability in the household because she is better qualified to do so. He notes, however, that she does not make decisions counter to her husband's wishes.<sup>4</sup> Staples formulates his theories from the historical family structure and role variations in the Negro family. Moynihan also makes reference to the rate of unemployment of Negro male and the economic support of the Negro women which Staples contributes to the America's racist employment barriers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Staples, op. cit., pp. 154-155.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 156-157.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 153-54.



Denise Kandel has revealed some interesting observations in her study of the matriarchal pattern in the Negro family.<sup>1</sup> Kandel administered a structural questionnaire to a group of working class, high school adolescents. Questionnaires were mailed to their mothers. Twenty per cent of the sample surveyed was comprised of a Negro populace. They were questioned on the pattern of interaction that they had with their parents: parental authority, communication between parent and child, parental support, affective quality of the relationship, and identification.<sup>2</sup> The results indicated the following:

1. Sixty-six per cent of the Negro girls in intact families report that most decisions between themselves and their mothers are reached unilaterally by their mothers, as compared by forty per cent of white girls. The difference for boys is smaller. Fathers have less authority over their children in intact families than fathers in white intact families.
2. In intact families, Negro boys are closer to their mothers than are white boys,<sup>3</sup> White boys are closer to their fathers in intact families.
3. In broken families, Negro boys have a closer relationship with their mothers. Negro girls have a closer and more intense relationship with their mothers in broken homes than white mothers.
4. Negro mothers have a higher degree of educational aspirations for both daughter and son than the white mother.
5. More Negro mothers encourage their sons to go to college than white mothers.

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<sup>1</sup>Denise Kandel, "Race, Maternal Authority, and Adolescent Aspiration" American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 76 No. 6, May, 1971.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 1002-3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 1004-1016.

6. Regardless of the family structure, broken or intact, Negro mothers have similar aspirations. White mothers have higher aspirations for their daughters in broken families than in intact families; their aspirations for their sons are even higher.

Kandel's research provides data which refutes the detrimental factors placed on the role of the matriarchal structure of the Negro family.

Herbert Gans' analysis of the Moynihan Report in the area of illegitimacy, indicates that lower class families are not stigmatized for their illegitimacies as middle class families.<sup>1</sup> He further indicates that, "A family headed by a capable if unmarried mother may thus be healthier than a two-parent family in which the father is a marginal appendage."<sup>2</sup>

Hyman and Reed's article "Black Matriarchy Reconsidered" reveals even more interesting results on the matriarchal pattern in Negro households.<sup>3</sup> They found in the Harris National Poll which asked a Negro populace which parent played the most important role in properly socializing the child, that the respondents indicated the mother. They found in the 1960 Almond and Verben study of an equal sex distribution of both Negro and white participants that important family decisions were made by the mother in both racial groups. In regard to the decision-maker in the

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Gans, "The Negro Family--Reflections on the Moynihan Report" in The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy by Lee Rainwater and William Yancey (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1967, pp. 451-52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 451.

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Hyman and John S. Reed, "Black Matriarchy Reconsidered: Evidence From Secondary Analysis of Sample Surveys," Public Quarterly Vol. 33, No. 3 (Fall, 1969), pp. 346-358.

family, both Negro and white families indicated the mother. The significance of these findings suggests similarities in family socializing patterns among racial differences.

Social class in family functioning was cited as an important factor that supports the assumption of child rearing practices differing among class than among racial context. Gersimar and Gerhart's (1966) study on social class and ethnicity indicates that:<sup>1</sup>

The Negro family is handicapped in its ability to provide a home and socialize the young. However, that handicap is above all a function of socio-economic position as evidenced by the fact that, in most strata of the social hierarchy, Negroes are not functioning differently at a significant level from Puerto Ricans and whites.

The researchers further suggest that the problems of the Negro family should be viewed and treated within the context of the Negro's problematic position in society.<sup>2</sup>

Studies comparing family trends among class and social standings provide significant insight on Moynihan's thesis.

Delores Mack also has found that social class is more important than race in her study on the Negro matriarchal household.<sup>3</sup> Mack observed that Negroes and whites did not differ in their perception and use of power in a marriage relationship. She indicated that researchers have also

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<sup>1</sup>Ludwig Germar and Ursula Gerhart, "Social Class Ethnicity and Family Functioning: Exploring Some Issues Raised by 'Moynihan Report'", Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 30 (August, 1968), p. 487.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 487.

<sup>3</sup>Delores E. Mack, "Where the Black Matriarchy Went Wrong" Psychology Today Vol. 8 (Jan. 1971), pp. 24, 86-7.

overlooked the power of sex in a marriage, especially among Negroes.<sup>1</sup>  
In all social classes, the wife has been viewed as the primary decision-maker in the household.<sup>2</sup>

In the studies cited in this chapter, each has directly or indirectly dealt with the ideology of a stability existing in the Negro family. Elizabeth Herzog's "Is there a Breakdown of the Negro Family," indicates that while attacking the weaknesses of the Negro family, attention should be given to those strengths which have enabled it to survive. She quotes Robert Coles:

I was constantly surprised at the endurance shown by children we would all call poor or, in the current fashion, "culturally disadvantaged." . . . What enabled such children from such families to survive, emotionally and educationally, ordeals I feel sure many white middle-class boys and girls would find impossible? What has been the source of strength shown by the sit-in students, many of whom do not come from comfortable homes but, quite the contrary, from rural cabins or slum tenements.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Herzog, "Is There a Breakdown of the Negro Family" in The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy by Lee Rainwater and William Yancey (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1967), p. 354.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis has been to analyze the Moynihan Report on the Negro family in America through empirical investigation.

The Moynihan Report has been a controversial topic since its publication in 1965. The major etiology investigated in this controversy has been focused on the matriarchal pattern of the lower-class Negro family. Moynihan contributes the matriarchal structure to a "tangle of pathological" consequences within the Negro family, such as illegitimacy, marital disruption, welfare dependency, low educational attainment (especially for Negro males), and other socio-psychological disorders.

By establishing a basic foundation from the works of E. Franklin Frazier on the Negro family, Moynihan has interpreted and formulated a thesis which defines the Negro family as a deteriorating unit.

In order to present a reasonable analysis of the Report, it was necessary to discuss the research of pro-Moynihan scholars in contrast to those scholars who find his thesis unacceptable.

In retrospect to the two main chapters of this thesis, (chapters three and four), the researcher views the studies of the Moynihan supporters as formulating their findings from a negative frame of reference in regard to the Negro family. The refuting scholars of the Moynihan thesis are more success-oriented or, in other words, they have based their research more on the strengths of the Negro family.

The relevance of the Moynihan Report lies not only in its policy-making effect (which shows promising prospects for the social scientist) but also in its controversial nature which is and will continue to arouse interest in researchers of the Negro family for quite a while. The Report has pointed out the existing disadvantages in the Negro community which have been a result of prejudice, discrimination, and racism in the larger community.

Moynihan's study suggests that Frazier envisaged the destruction of the Negro family resulting from its own make-up of pathological characteristics. Frazier's work on the Negro family, places the family unit within a core existing by filtrating the social-economic values of a larger society that actually desires no part of it in the first place. Because of its presentation of socializing elements defined as abnormal in the larger society, it becomes difficult to view the lower class family in any other perspective than detrimental and deteriorating.

Whereas we have presented the generalizations of two schools of thought on the Negro family in America, we must conclude that the status of present research suggests that the topic will proliferate where scholars of the family meet for several decades. In many instances, the debate will revolve around the efforts of the Harvard-MIT scholars and those of the Black-liberal establishment.

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